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The League of Nations and
the Democratic Idea

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BY

PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY

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THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA

AMONG all the evil aspects in which War has revealed itself to our generation there is none more horrible or more widely felt than its enslavement of whole nations to the will of the few.

It is no part of my task to discuss the origins of the present War. The verdict of history is, in my judgement, already irrefutably pronounced; (the War of 1914 was a war of ambition forced by the German Government upon an unwilling world.) But my present purpose is to discuss the War merely as a fact, irrespective of any questions of its 'justice' or 'injustice' or the comparative degrees of guilt resting on this party or that. ~~§~~ Whatever view a man may take of the origins of the War, it remains clear that millions of poor men in divers regions of the world have been dragged suddenly, and without any previous action of their own, into a quarrel which they neither made, nor desired, nor understood; and in the course of that quarrel have been subjected again and again to the

very extremity of possible human suffering, while those at whose will they fight for the most part contemplate the battles from a distance or else sit at home in glory. To say this is not necessarily to condemn the belligerent Governments. In my opinion some of them were grossly to blame and others quite innocent; but even if all were equally to blame, or if no one was to blame at all, it would make no difference. (The fact is unchanged that, under the present conditions of state organization and national sovereignty, the life and liberty and property and happiness of the common man throughout the world are at the absolute mercy of a few persons whom he has never seen, involved in complicated quarrels that he has never heard of.) No artisan, no peasant, no remote wood-cutter or shepherd in the whole of Europe, however law-abiding and God-fearing, can be sure henceforth that he will not suddenly by due process of law be haled away to a punishment more cruel than that normally reserved for the worst criminals. If not killed, he may be wounded, blinded, maimed for life, his business ruined, his family reduced to want and his home broken up. And not only that. He must lose not only his happiness but his innocence also. He must do things which his whole soul abominates. He must give himself up to the work of killing other men like himself and previously as innocent as himself. And all of it owing to no fault and no will of his own!

True, when he is called upon to come and fight for his country, the matter is generally put to him in such a light that the average man responds with instinctive loyalty. He joins the colours willingly and he fights bravely. But this trustful innocence of the victims does not diminish the moral hideousness of the whole transaction. The wrong is doubtless more flagrant and obvious when a Russian Jew, or Tchech, or Croat, or Schleswiger is forced to fight and die for a cause he hates; but I doubt if it is inherently more repulsive than the injury done to these willing victims in every nation, so simple and often so basely deceived.

This does not mean that the individual statesmen responsible for a war are villains. Of course the true war-makers are. The men who plot deliberate wars for national or personal ambition stand ever more deeply damned as we consider the full nature of their action. But the wrong done to humanity may be almost as great when the statesmen concerned are, in ordinary parlance, free from all blame. (It sometimes happens that mere historical causes bring two states into such a clash of national interests or ideas of honour that, under present conditions, they can hardly help declaring war.) In such a case, it may be that a greater degree of wisdom might have found a peaceful way out of the difficulty. (But, judged by ordinary standards, the statesman who, with a just cause behind him, declares war cannot

be blamed, even where the result of his action is to spread fruitless misery over whole continents.)

It would seem, then, clear not only that war, when it occurs, is a monstrous evil to mankind in general ; but, more specifically, that the whole principle on which questions of Peace and War are decided at the present day involves, in most cases, a frightful injustice to the common people. (One can see what the revolutionary Socialists mean when they asseverate wildly that all wars are made by a few 'capitalists and blood-suckers', and that no people, if fairly consulted, would ever make war on another.)

A philosophic Socialist, especially if his experience is drawn from Russia or the Central Empires, will drive this point further home.

If we analyse roughly the obvious tendencies that make for War, he will point out, not of course that they are confined to one class in the population, but that, in part at least, they do consist in 'sinister interests', and that such interests naturally flourish more among the rich than the poor. Of course it does not in the least follow, because a man has a sinister interest, that he is necessarily guided by it. There are thousands of countervailing motives, motives of conscience, honour, public opinion, and ordinary habit, which among decent members of an average decent society swamp and obliterate the sinister motive. It is to the interest of the medical profession that there should be epidemics, to that of the under-

takers that they should be fatal; but neither profession can be accused of habitually pursuing these ends. 'Still', our Socialist will argue, 'the sinister interests are always there, a source of possible danger. In a completely unmilitarized and uncorrupt society they do no harm; but if once the poison gets into the system, they begin to act.'

(The most obvious 'sinister interest' is that of the Armament firms.) We most of us remember the revelations that took place in 1913, showing that Krupps, for example, not only possessed German newspapers—one of them professedly Socialist!—which they used for their own purposes. This was bad enough. But they actually owned French newspapers as well, and had press-agents in Russia; and thus manipulated the press on both sides of the frontier. This was an obvious infamy. One can hardly imagine that after the War the state of things which led to it will be tolerated in any decent society. The Armament rings are great commercial companies which will be ruined if the nations enjoy long and secure peace, will make considerable fortunes if there is frequent fear of war, and colossal fortunes if there is actual war. (In other words, here we have groups of people, and powerful groups, who are subject to an enormous and perpetual temptation to compass the utter misery of their fellow-creatures, and who have every facility for doing so in secret.)

Again, though commerce and finance have on the

whole always suffered heavily through war, it is notorious that a great many persons and companies have made vast fortunes, both in this and in previous wars ; and it is not likely that none of them expected to do so beforehand. Some, no doubt, were completely taken by surprise by their own profits ; and no one would for a moment suggest that because a firm made money out of some war therefore its directors desired the war. (But evidently there do exist a number of moneyed interests to which an outbreak of war means success and prosperity.)

(Another sinister interest is that of the professional Army and Navy, especially in their more ambitious elements.) To say this implies no prejudice against the soldier or sailor ; it implies only that their nature is human nature. To educate a man for the Army ; to train him in a walk of life which, to those who follow it, seems by far the most thrilling and glorious in the world ; to accustom him to the thought that war, when it comes, will bring him a chance to use all his powers, to serve his country, to rise in his profession, and to leap perhaps from obscurity to the most dazzling form of glory that humanity knows : to do all this and then expect him not to desire war is surely to demand too much of human nature. Of course a conscientious soldier will often work conscientiously to avoid war. An experienced soldier will often feel more gravely than any civilian the horrors of war. But one has only to talk intimately

in time of peace to a few young officers to realize how their spirits naturally leap up at the prospect of putting in practice the art to which they have devoted their lives.

It is no doubt quite the reverse with the average unprofessional army, whether volunteer or conscript. The temporary soldier makes all the sacrifice and stands to receive almost none of the rewards. In most wars it is the higher command which has the most to hope for and the least to suffer.

And the statesmen? Our Socialist critic will not let them off lightly. Statesmen have no friends. If he is reasonable we may get him to admit that among those statesmen whom he has known personally there was as great ability and as much strength and loftiness of character as he could have expected to find in any other walk of life. 'But', he will argue, 'statesmen deal habitually with such large issues, and have to preserve their calm of mind amid such vast ebbs and flows of human suffering, that their judgement in such matters becomes, and ought to become, to a certain extent inhuman. If it is part of your daily business to sign death-warrants you cannot afford to feel upset about each one of them. Remember, too, that the career of a statesman offers dazzling prizes, and therefore is specially attractive to men of strong ambition; and then consider how a very ambitious man who longs for a great place in history may be tempted by the thought of a victorious war.

Such a man, like the Milesians in the Greek proverb, is not by any means a devil, but he may act as if he was.'

(It is considerations like these which explain both the passionate protest against war and war-makers which rises from the democratic and socialist parties of Europe, and also the belief of many pacifists that the one antidote to the poison of war is Democracy pure and simple.)

'The common people,' they argue, 'alike in almost every war, feel that they never made it. They were trapped into it. The war was prepared in secret by small numbers of rich and powerful men—not of course by all the rich and powerful, but by some small groups of them—and only sprung upon the peoples when it was too late to speak. And whoever may gain from the war, the common man can only lose; he loses more no doubt if his country is beaten than if it wins, but he loses either way. His business is merely to bear the burden; to fight and be killed, and suffer and continue to suffer, sometimes to go mad from prolonged agony, while eminent persons in comparatively safe positions make touching speeches about his high animal spirits and careless heroism. (The people who gain are a few scores of politicians, a few hundred soldiers and adventurers, and a few hundred thousand profiteers—from contractors to munition-workers.)

Thinking along these lines, the remedy seems plain.

‘Let the people themselves conduct their own foreign policy. Let there be no more “secret diplomacy”; no secret treaties, nor conclaves, nor understandings, nor negotiations. Let every word spoken and every step taken be absolutely public and open.’

The weakness of this programme soon becomes visible. For one thing, in order to work, it must be accepted by all countries alike. It cannot be unilateral. It would be too dangerous having diplomacy open in Britain and America while it remains secret in Germany; having one party reveal all their counsels and the other not. But beyond that, there is confusion of thought in the phrase ‘secret diplomacy’, because it does not distinguish between the negotiation and the result of the negotiation. To avoid secret treaties is quite practicable, at any rate in times of peace; and Great Britain had as a matter of fact during the present century resolutely avoided them. None the less we were drawn into war. To avoid secret negotiations is a totally different thing, and, to my mind, an impossible one. It would imply that no two statesmen are ever to discuss an important international question together, except in the presence of reporters. Such a rule would be utterly destructive of business. Delicate situations must sometimes be talked over in private if they are not to result in open ruptures. Indeed, as a matter of practice, if statesmen themselves were forbidden ever to meet for consultation without informing the

Kölnische Zeitung and the *Daily Mail* they would simply depute unofficial friends to meet privately on their behalf. The idea is impracticable.

But the fundamental error lies deeper. The whole notion that because war and war-making, as things now stand, not only cause practical injury to the common people, but constitute an intolerable outrage on human freedom; therefore a mere democratizing of international machinery would ensure peace, is, in my judgement, a false inference.

If wars sprang entirely from class interests, from deliberate avarice or ambition, there would be some plausibility in the theory, though even then we should have to admit that there are large classes among the rich who suffer cruelly from war and large classes among the poor who make high wages by it. But notoriously other causes are at work too. Wars spring just as much from national passion and ignorance as from selfish scheming. And in most wars of recent times you could find as much war frenzy in the Jingo mob as in the most plutocratic club or drawing-room. The idolization of the working class is not much less foolish than other idolizations. Man's virtue does not vary according to his class or his income; it varies neither directly nor yet inversely; and it merely obscures counsel to talk as if it did.

True, if you take the real leaders of the working class throughout Europe they have a remarkably

clean record in this matter. That is because the working classes, like most other large groups, are led not by their average men but by their idealists. No one can attend many Socialist conferences or Trade Union Congresses, or Workers' Educational gatherings, or other meetings of the élite of the working class in Great Britain without feeling the strong idealism of the atmosphere. And I believe it is much the same in most other civilized nations. The audiences at such meetings will be duly interested, no doubt, in plans for raising their own wages and shortening their hours of work, but they are not roused or swept into enthusiasm except by an appeal to some great cause or ideal. Indeed, unless my insight is at fault, I should say that, in a meeting of working men, even when the discussion appears on the surface to be concerned merely with material subjects, the hearts of the audience are generally set on something quite different. They are not thinking of 'bread and circuses'; they are thinking, however crudely, of the building of the New Jerusalem. And, together with other great causes, they believe intensely in Freedom and in Peace. But that is in part because the societies that I speak of, the Socialist bodies, the Trades Unions, the workmen's Liberal and Radical Associations, have, in all the democratic nations alike, an idealist atmosphere. They tend to be led by the best minds of their class, who agree in most matters with the best minds of other classes. No doubt the

workers' hatred of war is intensified by the plain facts of their own class interest, and this makes the general sentiment for peace stronger in the working class than among the wealthy. But the working-class crowds at racecourses and football matches, in public-houses and music halls, are not appreciably more peaceful-minded nor yet high-minded than wealthier people of the same type.

Throughout most of human history there have been from time to time outbreaks of theory tending to glorify the absolute proletariat. Not merely the worker or craftsman, but the outcast, the disinherited, the oppressed. Its latest outcrop is Bolshevism. The proletariat, in the strict sense of the word, is that completely undistinguished mass of human kind which remains permanently at the bottom, while other people have either saved money or shown ability or made a reputation or learnt a trade, or somehow provided themselves with some security against the future. And the ground for glorifying them is mere despair of human nature. The Bolshevik theorist has observed that it is not only kings and priests and soldiers who oppress the community; all through society each class is hard upon the class below it. The capitalist oppresses the small trader, the bourgeois oppresses the workman, the skilled artisan oppresses the unskilled and unorganized. Therefore, he argues, the only way to avoid oppression is to put power in the hands of

the lowest class of all. They alone are entirely innocent; and they alone can oppress nobody!

The truth of course is that, as soon as the power was put in the hands of the 'proletarians', they would have changed their social character. They would have become a ruling class, different from other ruling classes only in their large numbers and, perhaps we may add, in their extraordinary lack of talent. They would be exposed to all the temptations that beset every governing class, and would be particularly ill-suited to resist them. Their rule would be no safeguard against war or anything else.

(The fundamental error of the Bolshevik or sans-culotte theorist lies, I believe, in his conscious or unconscious acceptance of class selfishness as the natural and unavoidable basis of human government. If every ruling class is, as a matter of course, to rule in its own interests, then by all means let the largest class rule; but the hypothesis itself is one that destroys all hope for the future of mankind. To accept it is a sin against the whole spirit of Democracy. (The essential doctrine of Democracy is that each man, as a free human soul, lives of his free will in the service of the whole people.) This ideal is no doubt hard to attain, but it is not hard to aim at. It is the only ideal permanently possible for any society that has emerged from the rule of mere custom or the divine right of kings. In certain ancient Greek cities a man, before casting a vote,

swore in the presence of the gods that he was voting to the best of his judgement for the good of the whole city. And that is still the spirit in which every good citizen ought to vote, and as a rule does vote.

The externals of Democracy as a form of government can be attained easily enough: parliamentary institutions, universal suffrage, abolition of privileges and the like. But Democracy as a spirit is not attained until the average citizen feels the same instinctive loyalty towards the whole people that an old-fashioned royalist felt towards his King. It is that spirit which is first needed in order to build up the organization for preventing war.

For that is the need before us. It is not enough to trust to the presence of wise statesmen; they can be so easily thwarted by fools. It is not enough to make them directly subject to democratic control; nor to remove the sinister interests which make for war and the aggravating causes which make disputes more difficult than they need be. All these things are good, but they are not enough. War does not always arise from mere wickedness or folly. It sometimes arises from mere growth and movement. Humanity will not stand still. One people grows while another declines. One naturally expands in a particular direction and finds that thereby it is crossing the path of another. The strong and civilized peoples tend to spread over the world. The uncivilized and incompetent peoples both tempt others

to war by their weakness and provoke them by their turbulence. Races hitherto subject to others make progress and demand their freedom. All these modes of growth produce situations which cannot be solved without great international changes, and there is at present no machinery for accomplishing such changes except the monstrous machinery of war.

It is right that Italy should be free and united; yet how could that have been achieved except by war? How could America have become independent? How could the Balkan peoples have escaped from the yoke of the Turk? All these changes were obviously desirable, and there will be others like them in the future.

When the need for change occurs within the limits of one sovereign state the machinery for dealing with it exists, and the difficulty is far less. Most of the British colonies gained their powers of responsible government without serious friction: England had learnt her lesson in America and Canada. The gradual growth of self-government in India will be an infinitely difficult but probably a peaceful process. The great classical instance in recent times is the separation, without war, of Norway and Sweden, an achievement which filled Europe with admiration.

(When the impending change affects the interests of two sovereign states, it needs good statesmanship and favourable circumstances to avoid a quarrel.) The peaceful partition between the Powers of 'spheres of

influence' in Africa was justly considered a great achievement of statesmanship; but there no Power was required to give up anything. It was only a question of mapping out their future gains. Yet it came very near to war. The peaceful clearing up of the outstanding issues between Great Britain and France towards the end of last century needed the wisest and most patient diplomacy, though the points at issue were none of them worth even a day's war. At one time it actually seemed as if war might have ensued because, in a clause of the old Treaty of Utrecht, granting certain fishing rights to the French, no one had thought of deciding whether lobsters were fish. At another time a boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana, in which the maps were not in agreement, seemed incapable of settlement except by war between Great Britain and the United States. And such wars would have been madness.

True, these acts of madness were avoided. Throughout the nineteenth century and up to 1914 an ever-increasing number of international difficulties were settled without war. The method was diplomatic conference and, when that failed, arbitration. In 1914 special arbitration treaties already existed between most of the Western nations, except Germany; and not only the treaties, but the spirit of fair dealing and 'cordial understanding' which had grown up between Great Britain and most of the other Powers, made the final cessation of war between civilized

states a goal by no means unattainable. It only needed the further spread of the 'cordial understanding' to include Germany and Austria, and so achieve that 'bringing together of the two great groups' which was the main purpose of Sir Edward Grey's policy.

(Instead we have had the Great War. But in this, as so many departments of life, the War presents us not with a conclusion but with a tremendous interrogative. Shall we go infinitely back or decisively forward? Shall we become much better than we were or vastly worse?) It must be the one or the other. We must either devote the whole of our national energies and resources, all our science, all our imagination, all our leisure, to preparation for a next war, not very distant, which must surpass in horror anything that the world has known and must leave European civilization poisoned if not dead; or we must by deliberate effort build up some permanent structure of international understanding which will make such a war impossible. To do the first we need only drift with the tide; to achieve the second we must rise up and conquer circumstances.)

The problem is entirely one of self-control and self-guidance. Every thinking person knows that if the states of Europe continue to practise war their doom is sealed. The precipice is visible, straight before us; are we men, with the power to think and check ourselves and turn aside, or are we as the Gadarene swine, incapable of turning? The situation is in some ways

like that of the drunkard or the drug-taker who knows that, saved for once, he must from henceforth either abstain or perish. But in one way it is much more difficult. It is complicated by the constant suspicion that, if we abstain from war, other nations will not.

If we disarm, suddenly or gradually, they will seize the opportunity to strike. (As we think on these lines, it seems as if we must at least be prepared for war; and if we begin to prepare, of course others must do the same; and thus begins the fatal competition in armaments which leads to gradual bankruptcy or to swift destruction.)

(There is no way out except co-operation.) We must face the sacrifices. We must give up some part of our freedom. We must be prepared on occasion to allow a Congress of Powers to settle questions which we should prefer to treat as purely domestic. We must tame our pride a little. And in return we shall both form a habit of friendly consultation with other Powers instead of hostile intrigue, and shall be saved from the deadly dilemma of either provoking war by making preparations or inviting attack by going unprepared. (A number of nations which act together can be strong enough to check an aggressor though no one of them alone is so strong as to threaten its neighbours.)

(America is already committed to the League. America, the richest and strongest and most peaceful Power in the world, stands as the nucleus.) Some other Powers

will for certain join it. (The hope is that the League will be so strong and general that to stand out of it will be a marked action. The Power that stands out will thereby be confessing that it means still, in spite of all that the world has suffered, to cleave to war and make its fortune by war.) (Let us hope there may be no such Power. But if there is, its existence will not wreck the whole League; it will perhaps bind it the more together, as law-abiding settlers stand together against a robber or pirate.)

(As to machinery, what is needed in the first place is probably a very simple thing: merely an adding together of the present arbitration treaties, so that the various nations which have separately agreed to arbitrate their differences shall form a League with mutual guarantces.) (At present if there are two nations bound by treaty to arbitrate and one chooses to break the treaty the offender suffers no penalty. He has only one enemy, and that an enemy of his own choosing. But if there are twelve nations the offender has eleven enemies.) Again, where there is a League of many Powers there is no danger, as there may be in a separate arbitration, of two arbitrating Powers settling their differences at the expense of a third. (Still more important, such a League would be a permanent organ, always ready to act, and embodied in a permanent machinery.) It would not, like the old Concert of Europe, have to be called into action at the last moment to deal with a trouble that

is already acute. And it would not, like the Concert, consist of diplomatists whose normal business is to think only of their own country's interests. It would consist of men trained and accustomed to think for the common good.

Most of the schemes hitherto proposed for a League of Nations contemplate the formation of two international bodies for dealing with the two different forms of international friction which at present act as causes of war. These are, first, definite questions of right and wrong, of damages and reparations, which can be brought before a judiciary Tribunal and decided on legal principles. Secondly, those clashes of interest or national honour which are not capable of such decision, especially those of the sort already mentioned, which arise from the development of the human race and the natural expansion of the more civilized populations as compared with the less civilized. These clashes of national need are not matters of law, nor yet of arbitration: they call for foresight and constructive statesmanship.

For the first class of differences there must be a Tribunal, judicial in character, like the Tribunal at The Hague composed of learned and disinterested lawyers, chosen from different nations in some more or less fixed proportions, but of course by no means regarded as representing national interests. They are there to do justice, irrespective of nationality. The formation of this body should not be difficult.

The problem has already been solved at The Hague.

The other body presents both greater difficulties and, if successful, greater advantages. It is sometimes styled a Council of Conciliation, sometimes described as a sort of International Parliament. Its business will be not to judge causes or give binding decisions, much less to issue decrees like the Tribunal, but to discuss beforehand problems of international policy, to enable the nations to join in common council and to exercise a common foresight. Such a Council of Conciliation ought to have four special advantages. It will discuss questions early, before they have grown dangerous or inflamed. It will, by the mere presence of a calm and disinterested majority, tend to keep the atmosphere cool and the chief disputants reasonable. It will make it easier for either of them to give way, since he will not be yielding to his opponent but accepting the opinion of their common friends. And lastly, though it would be a mistake to introduce an element of compulsion into the discussions or recommendations of the Council, there will be the knowledge that, where the general opinion is clear, there is force somewhere in the background. A nation which goes definitely against the policy of the Council of Conciliation knows that sooner or later it is likely to face the Tribunal, and behind the Tribunal there is the sanction of the economic boycott, of excommunication, and ultimately of a crushing war.)

An interesting objection has been raised to the working of this Council. The members, it is argued, if selected by their various nations, as they must naturally be, will be merely so many diplomatists, each representing his own nation and bound to act in its interests. And, since they will not be dealing as judges with definite points of law, but as politicians arguing for discrepant policies, the analogy of The Hague does not help us much. 'Imagine a clash of interests', the objector says, 'between France and Germany.' The French representative will speak for French interests, the German for German interests. Each will expect his friend to act as "a brilliant second", like Austria at Algeciras. And the result will be not justice nor even an attempt at justice. It will be merely a veiled struggle. And in the end perhaps it will be decided by the far from disinterested votes of some Balkan or South American states, following the lead of the Power that they fear most. How can we expect any spirited nation to accept such a decision?

To this objection, which is no doubt a serious one, there are three chief considerations to urge in reply. First, the character of the Councillors selected. It is not in the least impossible, it is not even difficult, to select in any of the leading Powers half a dozen or more wise and trustworthy men, who will discuss a great question with a sincere desire to reach the best and fairest decision, undisturbed by either per-

sonal or national interest.) I could certainly name six Englishmen who could be perfectly trusted, and I think I could name an equal number of Frenchmen, Americans, and Scandinavians.

(Secondly, the members of the Council will have working permanently upon them a stronger motive than any ordinary motive of national pride or ambition—the determination to avoid war.) It is a commonplace to point out that this motive is enormously strengthened since 1914. No doubt the War may have acted in two opposite ways at once. It may have familiarized great numbers of men with the thought of slaughter. It may have doubled or trebled the tendency to crimes of violence. But it has surely burned deep into the hearts of all sane human beings the sense of what war means—the horror, the misery, the incalculable loss. We may, I think, feel sure that during the next ten or twenty years at least, when the Council will be forming its habits and fixing its character, the members will meet in a quite different spirit from that of an ordinary Diplomatic Conference of the old sort. (Then their minds were full of their various national ambitions and antagonisms; in future such desires will surely be dwarfed by one main concern—to avoid by common counsels the common ruin.)

(In the third reason we come back, at last, to Democracy.) Our imaginary objector argued that each party of delegates would be exposed to the full

blast of public opinion at home—of chauvinism, nationalism, aggressive finance, natural prejudice, and the like. There are many ways known for protecting them against these influences, as for instance Judges are protected. (But, beyond all, it will be the duty of the peoples themselves, and especially of their leaders, to make their international connexions a reality and not a sham.)

Fortunately other practical influences are already moving in this direction. The greater social and political questions are already overflowing the geographical boundaries of particular nations. Capital and industry are largely and increasingly internationalized. It is a matter of vital concern to workmen in one country that the workmen of a neighbouring country shall not be locked out or starved. Their fortunes are involved in the fortunes of their fellow-workmen throughout Europe. And the same is true of the employers and organizers. The churches, too, if they are to keep alive, must know what is interesting similar churches in other nations. The philanthropists, temperance reformers and the like, in various countries, are forming more and more the custom of conferring and acting together. In one of the greatest problems of the future, the treatment of subject nationalities and inferior races, it is absolutely necessary that the friends of the 'native' should try hard to act together, since those who exploit him are already instinctively

in league. These obvious international needs will have their effect on public feeling and are bound to be reflected in the press. The great questions will, as a matter of fact, be chiefly questions of economics, of industry, of political principle and theory, and so far as they are mere struggles of interest they will be class conflicts rather than national conflicts.

This tendency must be helped and encouraged. Everything must be done to prevent the great issues which divide men's minds from taking the form of brute struggles of greed or pride between armed nations. Let us hope that the disputes which come before the Council of Conciliation will not, even at the worst, be merely tugs-of-war between nations, with no principle involved but competing desires. They will also raise an issue between Free Trade and Protection, between Industry and Agriculture, between Liberalism and Reaction, between Socialism and Capital, or between some other of the great principles or groups of thought which divide on more or less similar lines all the progressive nations of the world. Divisions of this sort may lead to hot party feeling. They may cause grave domestic inconvenience. But no matter how hot the feeling or how grave the inconvenience, we can put up with them, for they cannot in themselves lead to war. No split of opinion or even of interest, neither political nor social nor religious, is fatally dangerous as long as it is not a split between sovereign states, because it is only such states, and

not parties or churches or social groups, that hold the keys of the arsenals.

The principle that will solve the problem of war is not Democracy, but Internationalism) (Or if that word seems to imply a lack of proper devotion to one's own country, let us say it is not Democracy nor yet Internationalism, but Brotherhood. We need the growth of brotherhood within each nation, and brotherhood between the nations also.) It may seem folly at the present time, when half the world is wild with hatred of the other half, to speak of brotherhood at all. But great extremes lead to great reactions. And the feeling of kindness and almost of tenderness that good soldiers so often have for the men who have fought against them and borne the same sufferings, may easily spread over the world more widely than most people now imagine. The orgy of nationalist passion which the War has roused will in part perhaps persist, but in part will produce its own antidote. Things have been done no doubt in this War which no man living who knows of them can forgive. But a generation soon passes. The burning lava quickly cools, and the grass and flowers grow over it. I wish one could be as confident of a recovery of wisdom and uprightness in the public affairs of Europe as we can be of a reaction towards peace and goodwill. For in the building up of a League of Nations, as in all great constructive work, neither correct principles nor good intentions suffice to ensure success. In the

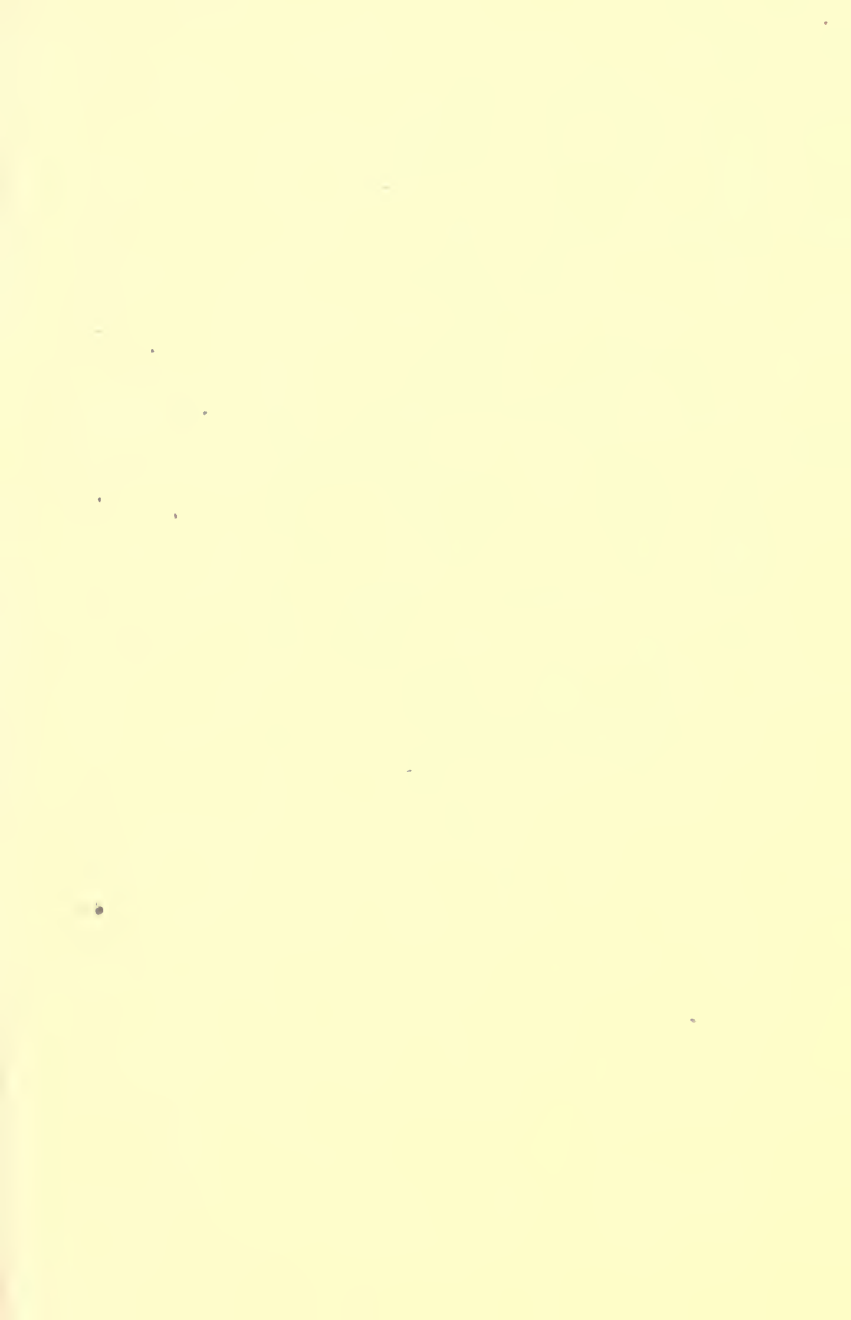
last resort it is a question of human character and human wisdom.

The next European war, if it ever occurs, will surpass in horror anything that the world has known. It will be to this War as this War has been to the old wars of our fathers, which now seem but small things, strangely chivalrous and ineffective and almost merciful. A strong fear, if nothing else, will drive the nations of the world into some common refuge, as wild beasts in a flood will take asylum together and forget to fight. But let us not libel our own nature. We can, after all, rise to the call of higher emotions than mere terror. We children of men are, in spite of present appearances, something better and gentler than the tiger and the snake. And the War itself, which opened such an abyss of human cruelty, has revealed also heights hitherto undreamed of, not merely of physical courage but of devotion and loyalty and self-sacrifice. The plain fact is that the men who are caught in the whirlpool of this War are too good for the life they now live. They are too good to be used for cannon-fodder, too good to be trained to drive bayonets into one another's intestines or stamp with nailed boots on one another's face. It is not only the pacifist and the eccentric who is craving in his heart for a gentler world. It is not only the thoughtful soldier, bent beneath a burden of intolerable suffering, who is torn by a long conflict between duties, in which he is forced to accept

the most hateful as the most compelling. It is the common man and woman, the workman and peasant and teacher and civil servant and tradesman, who after this surfeit of hatred is wearying for a return to love, after this waste of bestial cruelty is searching the darkness for some dawn of divine mercy, after this horror of ill-doing and foulness unforgettable is crying out, each man in his loneliness, for the spirit that is called Christ.

These things are not fancies. They are real forces and full of power, which no wise statesman will overlook or forget to reckon with. The building of a League of Nations is not an affair of emotion; it is a work of reason, of patience, of skill in international law and statesmanship; but those who have faith in the work will be helped forward by these hopes and longings. And even those who have no faith left in any of the often-baffled, often-discredited, schemes of human brotherhood will yet hesitate to reject the attempt at a League. For if the way forward shows only a doubtful hope, the way backward is blocked by a fear that is not doubtful, a certainty more ghastly than our worst dreams.

Human scepticism and human inertia are powerful forces, but these things are surely stronger.



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